

Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Mental Health and Developmental Services
Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Agency (SAPTA)
Funding Process

Updated November 16, 2007

The Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Agency (SAPTA, Agency) competitive funding protocols are designed to focus on input received from an independent Objective Review Committee made up of experts in the field. This process has been changed since its last update in January 2007 to accommodate holding the objective review meeting and funding decision meeting in public as well as a public solicitation for reviewers. However, the final funding decisions will be made by the Administrator of the Division of Mental Health and Developmental Services.

The process is essentially the same regardless of funding type or source; the only exception is for the State Prevention Infrastructure Funding (SPI) which will be addressed below. It begins with the release of a multi-year Request for Applications (RFA) and solicitation for objective reviewers. Please refer to the flow chart on page 4 of this document.

Request for Application: SAPTA uses the RFA to announce the availability of funding, specify the funding requirements and purposes of the funding, and provide instructions to guide in the preparation of an application. Project periods are for up to three years with non-competitive continuations granted to programs based upon availability of funding and successful progress of negotiated scopes of work in the intervening years.

Bidders Conferences and Questions: Along with explicit instructions on how to complete the RFA, the Agency generally conducts Bidders Conferences to provide technical assistance on responding to the RFA. The conferences are conducted in both Northern and Southern Nevada and are generally two days in length. The first day is open to new or previously unsuccessful applicants; the second day is for returning applicants. The first day consists of an in-depth review of the RFA; however, both days include time for extensive individual assistance to potential applicants. If a funding opportunity is limited to currently funded agencies the first day is unnecessary. The second day is a brief review of changes to the RFA from previous RFAs and highlights any new requirements specific to the funding. Questions are accepted throughout the process and are answered by staff as they arrive at SAPTA with a commitment to respond to each inquiry within two days of the request. Additionally, once a week all questions and answers are sent to all applicants who have filed a Letter of Intent.

Letters of Intent: A Letter of Intent (LOI) is required for all programs interested in applying for funding. This is done in order to identify the organizations that need the entire RFA packet which includes, among other things, numerous application forms and technical information. As noted above, this ensures that SAPTA knows who needs the questions and answers sent out weekly. Additionally, this allows the Agency to better anticipate the needs of the objective review process in terms of number of reviewers and number of days needed to complete the review.

Completeness Reviews: Prior to sending the applications on for Staff Technical Reviews and Objective Reviews, the Applications are reviewed for “completeness.” This process identifies those applications that have not met the requirements of the RFA and/or were received late. Applications that do not pass the completeness review are returned to the applicant along with a letter of explanation. These applications are not reviewed.

RFA Contents: The RFA includes information such as the prevention or treatment Program Operating and Access Standards (POAS), Nevada Health Information Provider Performance System (NHIPPS) data reporting requirements, and funding priorities. Base state and federal funding requirements are addressed as well as suggestions to ensure the submitted applications are complete and deadlines met. Each subsequent RFA issued by SAPTA incorporates changes from prior RFA processes and reflects the Agency’s commitment to continuous quality improvement. These changes and additions ensure that SAPTA continues to meet state and federal requirements and is able to report on the required federal National Outcome Measures (NOMs).

Objective Reviewers: Concurrent to releasing the RFA, the Agency invites community members to be reviewers. This is done using a newly developed form; a copy is attached. In addition to sending the forms to all past reviewers, funded and certified agencies and community partners, ads are placed in local papers. As applications come in, they are entered into a database and sorted by interest. Once it is known how many reviewers will be needed the database information is sorted and examined to determine if there are an adequate number of reviewers. If there are not, further solicitations take place until there are sufficient numbers to conduct the Objective Reviews. Conflict of Interest information is reviewed to ensure that no issues arise. If there are more than enough reviewers, a recommendation is made to the Division Administrator that reflects the diversity of the state.

Objective Review Committee: Once applications have been deemed to be complete they are forwarded to the Objective Review Committee and Agency staff. SAPTA conducts a brief orientation and training telephone conference call for the Objective Review Committee members covering the review process and forms. The scoring sheets repeat the RFA instructions and allow for comments and scoring. The members receive the applications as well as information on the performance of applicant agencies and programs that were funded in the past. The Objective Reviewers review the applications on their own and bring the completed sheets to the meeting. Depending upon the number of applications to be reviewed, reviewers may be assigned to serve as either a primary reviewer, secondary reviewer or a reader.¹ In all cases, the reviewers will receive all of the applications and are asked to review them all if time allows.

Staff Technical Reviews: SAPTA staff meets as soon as the applications are deemed complete. The staff technical reviews are conducted by both the fiscal team and the team which has responsibility in the area being funded (treatment, prevention coalitions, prevention direct service, etc.). The teams then meet and complete a review form together which will be presented by a team analyst at the Objective Review Committee meeting.

¹ Depending upon the number of applications SAPTA staff may decide to utilize a different review scheme.

Review Meeting: The review meeting is facilitated by an outside group facilitator who does not read or score the applications. The review begins with the facilitator discussing the type of review to be conducted: funding is fully competitive, the applications must be scored and ranked or formula funded, the applications must be reviewed but not necessarily scored and ranked. The decision on how to proceed with formula funded applications is made in consultation with the objective review committee with the concurrence of the senior SAPTA staff member present.

The review then moves on with the SAPTA analyst assigned presenting the Staff Technical Review to the objective reviewers. This is followed by the assigned primary reviewer reading his or her review(s) and the secondary reviewer(s) doing the same. The readers then add to the review with any comments not addressed by the previous reviewers.² A brief discussion then follows after which each reviewer scores the application and makes a funding recommendation on a form provided for this purpose. These forms are collected from the reviewers and given to SAPTA staff that will add up the scores and funding recommendations, average them and post them on a white board/poster paper.³ Completed review forms are also collected at this time from all the reviewers assigned to complete them. This process continues until all the applications have been reviewed.

Funding Recommendations: SAPTA staff will prepare a unified list noting each application scored in rank order with its funding recommendation. Staff will ensure that the white board/poster board notes how much of the available funding has been recommended for spending. Once all reviews have been completed the facilitator will lead a discussion among all objective reviewers to determine if there is a need to adjust the recommendations. If the group wishes to make changes they are free to do so at this time; however, there must be a *consensus*⁴ to do so. SAPTA staff does not participate in this part of the process. The resulting funding recommendations are then taken to the Division Administrator.

Funding Decision: SAPTA staff will compile the information from the Objective Reviews into a database and prepare forms that summarize the reviews. These forms will be available for the Division Administrator and for the applicants. Additionally, as needed, the staff will prepare a briefing for the Administrator addressing any issues not covered during the review meeting that they deem important for the Administrator to know prior to making funding decisions. The staff will meet with the Administrator and review all the information. The Administrator will direct the staff on his/her decisions; the staff will then write up the decisions for his final review. Staff will schedule a public meeting during which the Administrator will announce the funding decisions.

Once the decisions have been announced the Administrator will direct the Agency Director and SAPTA staff to contact successful applicants and begin scope of work and budget negotiations. Unsuccessful applicants will also be contacted at this time. An explanation of how to appeal the decision will be included in the correspondence that conveys the funding decisions.

² If SAPTA staff chooses a different review scheme then this process will be adjusted as necessary.

³ In those cases where there is no need to score the applications, the strengths and weaknesses of the applications will be documented instead of the scores.

⁴ Consensus is defined as: An opinion or position reached by a group as a whole (*American Heritage Dictionary*).

There is a slight variation to this process for treatment applications: For treatment applications, the Agency solicits clinical input from the Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies (CASAT) at the University of Nevada Reno. CASAT helps review the treatment applications to determine the applicants' clinical effectiveness and use of Evidence-Based Practices. This information is then sent to the Objective Reviewers to assist them in their reviews.

State Prevention Infrastructure (SPI) Funding Process: The process outlined above will be used by SAPTA's certified and funded substance abuse prevention coalitions to award implementation funding available from the state general fund for direct service substance abuse prevention programming. SAPTA will implement a "deeming process" similar to that used with the original State Incentive Grant to determine which Coalitions are ready to assume this responsibility immediately. Key components of this deeming process will be to mirror the state process at the local level including application of necessary components from the Nevada Open Meeting Law and the role of Objective Reviewers. Those Coalitions not initially ready to assume this responsibility will be given technical assistance and will partner with SAPTA to implement the SPI in their local service areas until they are ready to assume responsibility for the process. The goal of the deeming process will be for all Coalitions to assume responsibility for managing these funds at the local level as quickly as feasible.

**Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Mental Health and Developmental Services
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Request to Serve as an Objective Reviewer Form**

I respectfully request the opportunity to serve as an objective reviewer on the SAPTA Objective Review Panel for the following funding opportunities (check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Prevention Infrastructure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Treatment Wait List Reduction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Co-Occurring Pilot Project
<input type="checkbox"/>	Substance Abuse Prevention, Education and Awareness

I am aware that this commitment will require the following: attendance at a two-day public meeting in the Carson City area, the reading and reviewing of up to 20 applications, and the reading and scoring of up to 10 applications.

Each reviewer is responsible for fully disclosing all current affiliations. Conflicts of interest must be declared by reviewers prior to discussion of any matter that would provide direct financial benefit for that reviewer, or otherwise have the appearance of a conflict of interest. When funding or other decisions are made regarding an organization with which the reviewer has an affiliation, the reviewer shall state his intention to abstain from making specific motions or casting a vote, before participating in related discussion. The Agency or a majority of the Review Panel may also declare a conflict of interest exists for a reviewer, and ask that the reviewer be removed from the voting process. Please list any of the following affiliations in the lines below: 1) Employers; 2) Boards or Commissions; 3) Organizations in which you or any member of your immediate family has a substantial or material interest and, to your knowledge, the Agency has a grant, contract or cooperative agreement with; 4) Any allegiance or financial interest you or any member of your immediate family has that might affect or appear to compete with your duties on the SAPTA Objective Review Panel (Attach additional sheets as needed).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

Contact Address, Phone Number, E-mail

Fax completed form to 775 684-4185, attention Office Manager or mail completed form to 4126 Technology Way, 2 nd Floor, Carson City, NV 89706. Thank you.
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Request for Application (RFA) Process Funding Decisions

